

# FICTION BY THE BEST WRITERS

## THE EYES WITH SORROW

### BY LUCILLE BALDWIN VAN SLYKE

Tommy O'Brien, aged ten, dearly loved to awe all the new children who moved into his part of Dix Street with the uncanny tale of "de nutty lady who lives in de swell end of de street."

"I tells you wot I does," promised Tommy generously. "Thoisday I goes moved into his part of Dix Street wid de wash—nd de nutty lady Nuzly, youse can help fetch 'nd likely youse will get a squint at her—she cheerfully tolled six weary Saturdays, washing floors for the Dutch baker lady, while Antar fretted unceasingly in a sticky keg with a label that guaranteed the contents to be 'twenty-five lbs. net, strictly pure currant jell.' The Dutch baker lady had not parted with the precious vehicle cheaply by any means, nor until the springs of the wreck refused to support the weight of her own pudgy offspring.

But to Nazileh's eyes it was wonderful, its sides were still shiny with the gummy varnish daubed upon it by the 'Jew second hander' who had sold it to Mrs. Schmidt; its guard straps were still sticky from the sweets that the O'Brien baby had lavished upon them before he became a good 'walker.' Mrs. O'Brien had fairly wept when she sold it to the 'second hander.'

"You'll never have the like of this in yer shop again, Mister Solomon," she assured him; "I was the rich as bought it—nd havin' lost their young, God rest his pretty soul, they give me the buggy for me own that's the age of one they lost—you're fair robbin' a poor dead baby by payin' no more for it."

It was certainly true that the poor battered cart did retain, somehow, something of its former smartness. The glory of the collapsible hood that would no longer collapse, the wonderful rattle of the wheels, with the rubber almost rotted from the tires, were things to be very proud of; but best of all was the little gilded monogram on the footboard, much tarnished to be sure, but still a memory of the first wee occupant. Nazileh puzzled a great deal over the involved curves of the old English lettering, it was much prettier than that in the school book, at most as pretty as the graceful Arabic that her grandfather taught her to love.

Antar nearly wore the skin from his dimpled fingers trying to pull the pretty gilt trifles away. While he pulled he made soft, adorable baby noises; Nazileh solemnly believed he was 'readin' the nice story,' and if his seraphic smile meant anything he surely read a very happy tale. In her rapture over the cart and its beloved occupant she began to move away from her friends without any consciousness of their being. She smiled dreamily as she strutted between the handle bars and the dilapidated hood; the handles were far too wobbly to trust going down grade. She was pretending that she was a very rich lady taking her own little boy to a wonderful confectioner's shop where she was going to buy him a large thick handful of fuzzy spun sugar candy and a little round musmool with figs inside.

Tommy sighed heavily as he gazed after her.

"Dat's a date fer Thoisday," he screamed, "youse remember to hand around, Nuzly!"

"I leeke thad I go," called Nazileh

Geraldine drooped despondently.

"Hain't you going to take me, too, Tommy?" she asked.

And Tommy rose scornfully.

"Don't butt in," he advised bruskiy, "nd youse won't get trun down."

On Thursday, cheerfully tugging at one handle of the clothes basket, for perhaps after all it was not only love that had moved Tommy to ask her, Nazileh took her first journey to the up-town end of Dix Street. Her darkly fringed eyes opened wider and wider as she stared at the bits of lawn and at shining houses whose windows, every one had lace—same keen pattern thad othaire weendow haf," and when they finally reached the charming old corner guarded by high brick walls she drew a deep breath.

"Tommees-oo-breen," she asked softly, "ees thad nutty laadee the laadee of a sultan or a beg?"

"A what?"

"A reech mans—leeke thad you call preeseeden' or melonsairs?"

"Nope," he replied, "she hain't, but I bet you any money he could be a nald-erman if he'd get out in de district—he's de goods, he is."

Around the corner at the big gateway they put down the basket and Tommy reached up for the bell.

The boy peered cautiously through the gratings.

"Squint," he ordered tersely. "She's there."

Nazileh nodded, too awestricken for words; she shivered as she stepped close to the ornamental bars and then she looked for the first time at the "nutty" lady.

Slender and drooping, sitting listlessly in a great willow chair, white fingers twisting a bit of gay ribbon, gray eyes staring at nothing at all—Nazileh drew a long sighing breath, her expressive little hands flew to her heart.

"Allah mus' sen' thee tears, lofely laadee," she whispered, her own dark eyes filled with sadness, "Allah, mus', lofely laadee, weeth eyes of sorrow!"

"Gee!" gasped Tommy as the maid opened the gate, "cut it out! Nuzly, youse looks nutty yourself!"

Often in the days that followed the little Syrian sat brooding over the recollection of that drooping woman. Once she caught up Antar and hugged him so closely that he squealed all his funny little Oriental squeals.

"Don't you go dead, an' make me nutty," she whispered passionately; "me—ef you do thad I weel slap you good, leeke thad had Dootch laadee slap thad had Dootch babe!"

And once at night, when she lay awake watching the wonderful stars, she made a little prayer, stretching out her hands as she had seen Father Shis-kim, the priest do, when he prayed.

"Eef you please, Allah," she murmured, "I leeke thad you take a leeble time—jus' leeble, to sen' thad lofely

of their clean linen. There came a Thursday when Tommy slipped away surreptitiously on a little matter of his own and quite forgot that he was to carry clean sheets to the Nortons' housekeeper. His mother, sorely vexed, called to Nazileh as she was returning from school.

last he succeeded; a tiny gilt letter was loose in his dimpled hand.

"Ah! Ah! Ah!" he squealed.

The staring eyes were very bright now, they wandered searchingly about the pretty garden, and finally they saw the waving baby hand.

She dragged herself out of the chair

woman with closed eyes into the house.

In her terror she pushed the rickety perambulator home so fast that Antar bounced about in an ecstasy of baby glee, and all the while he hid in his fat little hand a dingy gilt letter "N."

All through that afternoon and far into that awful night a little girl tried to forget those white, shut eyes; all through a dreadful morning in a school-room she hid her face in her hands and would not speak. And when noon came she could endure it no longer, but dragged herself up Dix Street and stared through a great iron gateway.

The fountain was there and the pretty chairs, just as they had been yesterday, but this time there was only a man sitting under the trees.

After a long time Nazileh called to him.

"Meester," she cried softly and despairingly, "I leeke thad you please tell ad me—thad lofely laadee—thad nutty laadee—ees she go dead leeke her leeble babe?"

The man got up and went over to the gate quickly.

The little girl dragged out her question once more.

"The laadee—the pretty laadee—"

The man swung the gate wide.

"Are you the one who brought that baby here?" he asked.

Nazileh nodded.

And then the man did a very strange thing; he caught her in his arms and kissed her.

"God bless you, child," he whispered throatily; "she isn't dead—and she isn't going to be 'nutty' any more, she's going to get well—just think of that!"

Nazileh struggled to her feet, her dark eyes lifted themselves very sweetly.

"Thad is mos' nice of Allah," she said, "he haf sen' thad geft of tears—jus' to weep away thad sorrow—thad eyes thad was weeth sorrow, Me, I am mos'—mos' nutty weeth gladness—the lofely laadee!"

And suddenly, shyness overtook her. She made the pretty Syrian obeisance as her mother had taught her, touching her heart, her lips and her head with her slender hand and then she whirled about swiftly and fled through the gateway.

And as she ran she sang a funny little sobbing song under her breath to



"NUZLY, DOES YOUSE KNOW WHERE ME BOY TOM WINT?"

"Nuzly!" she cried from her basement window, and Nazileh, drilled with an Oriental sense of obedience to one's elders, flew with a swiftness that belied her languid grace, "Nuzly, does youse know where me boy Tom wint?"

Nazileh's dark lashes drooped on her olive-tinted cheek.

"Me—I am mos' sad thad I nod know," she answered evasively.

"Wait till I get my hands on 'im," promised Mrs. O'Brien ardently, "wait till I do."

Nazileh waited patiently; waiting comes easily to Syrians. "What ees eet thad you want?" she asked politely.

"I want these sheets carried up the street to the big house," answered Mrs. O'Brien, with many laconic details of why she wanted them carried and what she would do to her son for not carrying them and generally speaking what she thought of a boy who had inherited such lax tendencies from his father.

"Thad 'ouse weeth the nutty laadee?" queried Nazileh breathlessly. "Me, I weel take thad theens for you."

"You're all right, if you are a dago," Mrs. O'Brien answered effusively as she handed the bundle to the child; "God bless ye, it's not your fault that you is one."

"Oxuse," murmured Nazileh politely, "I ees nod daago. Me, I ees come from lan' of Syreeah!"

Halfway down the block she paused thoughtfully.

"Me—I go geet Antar, he weel ride an' carry the theens," she decided.

Presently she was once more journeying uptown with the sheets carefully tucked in the foot of the battered perambulator, and Antar, drowsily singing himself to sleep, safely strapped to the cushions.

She arrived at the great iron gates quite breathless, but when she reached she could not quite touch the bell. She could see the "lofely laadee" sitting in her willow chair. This time the chair was very near the gravelled path that led to the doorway of the house. Just as the child reached for the bell the nurse disappeared within the house. The gate was not quite fast; Nazileh pushed it open softly and pulled the perambulator inside, and then, when she had fixed the rickety brake, she started cautiously down the path with the bundle of sheets, tiptoeing when she passed the lady, but the lady never looked, she sat staring at nothing at all, twisting a bit of gay ribbon in her white fingers.

Antar was not quite asleep; presently he sat up and gurgled with surprise; he did not like to sit still in his wonderful perambulator, he wanted to move. His fingers fumbled at the handle of the brake; it jiggled delightfully. The gravelled path sloped gently toward the lady, the brake clicked itself loose from the fat little fingers, and the cart rolled smoothly down the path toward the drooping willow.

But the woman did not see; her eyes were indeed "blind with sorrow."

Antar sighed softly, then he leaned over the straps and began his old game of playing with the little gilt monogram on the footboard.

"Aie-up-um," he gurgled, very much as any baby gurgles, "aah—aah—" he sang contentedly.

The drooping woman lifted her head, she seemed to be listening, she frowned a little, she was very thoughtful.

Antar gave an extra hard pull. At

and crept slowly down the path, she knelt by the battered old perambulator, and her fingers, too, were playing with the little monogram.

"R E N," her voice said sweetly, "R E N spells baby—doesn't it? doesn't it?" and then she drew a long sobbing breath—and there came to her the "gift of tears."

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the same little tune that she often sang to Antar:

"The lofely laadee—" she sang.

"The lofely laadee."

"Me, I lofely the lofely laadee!"

(SHE DRAGGED HERSELF OUT OF THE CHAIR AND KNELT BY THE BATTERED OLD PERAMBULATOR)

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John Wolcott Adams

"AN' THE LITTLE BABEE THAD GO DEAD? THE NUTTY LADEE DON' FORGE-ET HEEM!"



John Wolcott Adams

"TOMMEES-OO-BREEN, EES THAD NUTTY LADEE . . . LEEKE THAD YOU CALL PREESEEDEN' OR MELONSAIRS?"

politely; "eet ees mos' keen thad you ask me, Tommees-oo-breen."

"Gee!" murmured the love-stricken Tommy, "dat goll's got de swellast manner in dis whole town—I wouldn't mind takin' her anywheres."

laadee the geft of tears—to take away thad eyes of sorrow, please, amen."

If Tommy O'Brien had not been a young man of many affairs, his mother's customers would have certainly enjoyed a more prompt delivery

or did he not know all the thrilling details of the lady's "nutteness"? Was it of his own mother intimately connected through her profession (she was a laundress) with the entire affair?

But when little Nazileh Sewaya heard the story, only half comprehending Tommy's vernacular, her lovely dusky eyes asked myriad questions that her faltering English could not express.

Geraldine Schmidt, who had heard the story before and always treated the affair with marvellous Tontonic indifference, made a stolid attempt to elucidate Tommy's narrative.

"She ain't regular bughouse, Nuzly," he explained while Nazileh groped for the meaning of the word "nutty"; "she can't throw no fits, yet, nor she don't takes it that she kills nobody—she's not nutty."

"Oxuse thad I ask," murmured the little Syrian perplexedly, "whad ees eet thad you call boog 'ouse'?"

Tommy and Geraldine eyed their friend with pitying disgust. "Gee," exclaimed Tommy, "ain't I never goin' to learn youse N' York talk?"

"Oxuse," murmured Nazileh penitently, "me, I theenk you haf nod tell ees ad me, thees thad you call"—her face wavered but with Oriental patience she made the attempt, "thees—u jus' call wo-orm 'ouse'."

And when Tommy had recovered from the noisy mirth into which Nazileh's attempt at idiom had thrust him, he made one last gigantic effort of explanation.

"Bughouse is bein' so nutty dat y has to chuck youse in Mattywan de lady hain't got dat bad yet, but de don't notice nothin' 'nd she don't know nobody ees ust to 'nd de gent is a nurse goll wid a white cap a'ayin' wid her all de time."

"An' the leeble babe thad go dead? he nutty laadee don' forge-et heem?" Nazileh demanded, hugging her baby other so close that he beat her with a dimpled fist.

"Dat's wot I'm tellin' youse," reiterated Tommy for the twentieth time; after de kid goes dead de lady goes fer her nut—nd den's de time de gent ees me mudder all de swell clothes de buggy 'nd 'tins dat dey has for a dead kid. Me mudder'd show you me de de clothes yet, but de buggy ees 'count of me kid brother is a sodd walker now."

Nazileh sighed. She had hoped it could be a nice story; all the stories he heard were treasures to carry home the shabby cushions and clapped her hands.

"Aie! Aie!" she cried. "Who haf a ride leeke a reech balace? Antar, Antar, Antar, mos' bes' nice habee een Amer-ca! Een a perambolator!"

For the perambulator was the pride of her heart. To obtain it she had

stt in de back yard—de gent has it fixed up awful swell for her. Gee, it's de corner 'nd dey's a bunch of trees around—de's got a swell fence made up high out of bricks 'nd all around de top of de fence is jugs wid wegetables growin' in 'em 'nd dey's a swell gate 'nd inside—his voice dropped impressively, "inside dat dey's a fountain squirtin' 'nd a bunch of chairs around 'nd de nurse goll sits a-watchin' de nutty lady 'nd de nutty lady sits a-watchin' nothin'."

At last Nazileh began to comprehend. "Me—I know," she interrupted eagerly, "thad laadee—she haf the eyes weeth sorrow—she nod see? Ees thad nod whad you call nutty? Me, I know those eyes weeth sorrow—on a time thad my fathaire ees keel my mothaire mos' heartee haf those keen' of eyes."

Eef a laadee haf a sorrow in her heart—Nazileh's slender hands were pressed against her dingy dress and her dark eyes were wide with horror—"an' she hold thad sorrow mooth too tight een her heart an' nod let ees come from her eyes weeth tears—by an' by thad ees all blind weeth sorrow—ees ees a theenk ver' sad."

"Honest, ef yer mudder get it?" demanded Tommy eagerly. Nazileh nodded slowly.

"She haf eet; she nod nevaire talk; she nod nevaire smile; she nod nevaire cry; she look thees way"—the little girl's eyes stared blankly and her mouth drooped—"but come a time Allah sen' to her thad geft of tears, an' thad sorrow—whad you theenk, thad sorrow ees weep out of her eyes—nod all," Nazileh sighed, "but mos' all an' then she ees speak with me, her daughtaire, an' woeth Antar, thees babe, an' weeth all peopels thad she haf know—onlee but she weel nod speak about thad sorrow—eet ees thad my fathaire ees keel."

"Gee," said Tommy thoughtfully, "I don't want dat for mine! De lady, she's got it good 'nd plenty! It's de real t'ing—she don't know nothin'—wait till youse sees her—she won't let on she sees youse—she looks right 'tro youse."

The baby wailed fretfully. Nazileh lifted him from the curbstone to put him in his perambulator.

"Thees babe," she panted proudly, "ees grow leeke de cole waggin—so mooth he weigh—eef I nod haf thees cart—"

The "cole waggin" was sucking his sister's neck so lovingly that she could not talk for joy. When his moist caress was ended she plumped him on the shabby cushions and clapped her hands.

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